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Miss Kate Rimell
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Rimell

Short inspection of South Ascot Village Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 July 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in November 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your deputy headteacher have a detailed and accurate view of how well the school is performing. This is because you have developed a rigorous monitoring cycle, which includes focused observations of teaching, scrutiny of pupils' books and talking to them about the progress they are making. Leaders have created a strong team spirit and sense of community in the school. Collectively, leadership has established a culture of high expectation across all aspects of the school's work and for every member of the school. Determinedly, you and your staff articulate and work to achieve your school's stated aim: 'It is as a united team we move, ever forward, toward an outstanding provision for all of our families and children.'

Pupils enjoy school, achieve well and are excited about their learning. Staff plan practical activities and investigations in many subjects. These ignite pupils' curiosity and thirst for learning. Pupils speak enthusiastically about numerous, memorable learning experiences. In Year 4, pupils were gripped by the chance to bring together their geographical, historical and mathematical knowledge as they undertook an archaeological dig with visiting experts from Royal Holloway, University of London.

Parents who spoke to me and those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, made very positive comments about the school. All parents who responded to the questionnaire would recommend the school to others. Parents value the help that you give to the whole family, particularly those

in challenging circumstances. Parents appreciate the many activities provided for their children, including swimming in the school's pool. One parent said, 'My daughter has thrived at the school both in and out of the classroom.' Another commented, 'Having the forest school, swimming pool and extensive grounds really sets it (the school) apart.'

Governors are aspirational for pupils and staff, and are involved strategically in the drive to continually improve pupils' outcomes. They closely monitor the effectiveness of the strategies designed to have a positive impact on the school's improvement priorities. They work diligently alongside leaders to ensure that groups of pupils achieve well, for example, the senior leader with responsibility for disadvantaged pupils. Governors visit classes and review samples of pupils' work thoroughly to confirm for themselves the improvements that have been reported in the governing body's meetings. Governors provide a good level of challenge through their probing questions at meetings. This diligence enables them to have a good understanding of the school's current performance.

At the last inspection, you were asked to improve the transition of children from the early years to key stage 1. Your staff team ensures that children are prepared well for their move from the Reception class to Year 1. Children have well-planned opportunities to experience what learning will be like in key stage 1. Leaders were also asked to extend and enrich pupils' experiences in other subjects. You have designed a stimulating curriculum that includes meaningful links between different subjects. As a result, pupils achieve well in all areas of the curriculum. At the last inspection, you were asked to further improve pupils' writing skills. Pupils' achievement in writing is good. However, there is more to do to improve this aspect of pupils' learning.

Senior leaders understand that there is scope to develop pupils' writing skills further. A priority for the school is to increase the level of challenge in some writing tasks. Some questioning by staff is effective in challenging pupils to improve their writing. However, the quality of teachers' questioning varies. When it is less effective, pupils' progress is not as strong.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school has a strong safeguarding culture. Policies and procedures are updated regularly and are fit for purpose. Relevant recruitment and background checks are carried out on new staff to ensure their suitability to work with pupils. Governors check safeguarding procedures and information frequently to ensure that records are up to date. All staff and governors receive regular and effective training, covering various aspects of safeguarding. Consequently, they have a clear understanding of the school's policy and procedures. They know which agencies can provide support and how to report concerns they may have about a pupil's welfare.

Pupils feel very secure in school. When I asked if they felt safe in school, one pupil said, 'Yes, definitely!' Pupils receive good guidance on how to keep safe. This includes information and advice about online safety and who to go to in school if

they feel sad or worried. The pupils I spoke to said that bullying is not a problem in their school, but if there are any issues they are resolved swiftly and successfully.

Inspection findings

- Leaders' work to improve the teaching of writing, ensuring that pupils write with greater clarity and structure, has led to improved progress and attainment. Pupils' work in books shows that their knowledge of grammar and punctuation is good. The persuasive letters written by Year 6 pupils were strong examples in which these skills were demonstrated. This writing also showed pupils' secure grasp of how to write a formal letter, and that they can use suitable conjunctions and rhetorical questioning to good effect. Displays of pupils' work around the school illustrate the high calibre of pupils' writing for a range of purposes across the curriculum. Despite evident improvements in pupils' writing skills, progress is not as strong as it could be. This is because the level of challenge in some writing tasks does not stretch pupils' thinking sufficiently. Teachers do not consistently question and probe pupils' understanding in enough depth.
- You have made it a priority and been successful in creating an exciting and relevant curriculum. Pupils told me that the learning is 'really helpful for when you get older' and that 'teachers go out of the way to make it (learning) fun.' Within the curriculum, you have sequenced the subject-specific skills carefully, setting out what is expected as pupils move through each subject in each year group. Consequently, pupils enjoy a carefully planned curriculum. This enables teachers to identify precisely the knowledge and skills pupils need to learn in each subject. Pupils' knowledge and understanding are built steadily across the curriculum. Through careful planning, leaders have also ensured that pupils develop good personal skills and have a firm understanding of the school's values and how to demonstrate them.
- Disadvantaged pupils benefit from the effective teaching of reading and writing as well as focused additional support for key skills, when needed. Leaders have rigorous systems to identify the specific needs of this group of pupils, and address any gaps in their learning. You hold regular meetings with teachers to challenge them rigorously about how well disadvantaged pupils in their classes are achieving. Staff have detailed plans for how they will support these pupils. Consequently, timely actions to address the weaker progress of disadvantaged pupils are in place and additional resources are allocated thoughtfully. For example, you use pupil premium funding to provide some disadvantaged pupils with one-to-one support to ensure they catch up with other pupils. Leaders track additional support continuously and closely, making sure that the current needs of disadvantaged pupils are met.
- Overall attendance is broadly in line with the national average. However, in the past, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has been low. You have established effective systems to identify and work closely with families whose children are absent too frequently. You, the deputy headteacher and the local authority have taken decisive action and maintained a tenacious approach to addressing absence. This has resulted in improved attendance for current disadvantaged pupils. As a result, their achievement is good. You strongly discourage parents

from taking their children on holiday during term time. Pupils who attend very regularly have their high attendance celebrated at specific points throughout the year. However, some parents continue to take term-time holidays, contributing to fluctuating attendance rates for some pupils, and their weaker progress. You are determined to work with individual families to further improve the attendance of a small minority of pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching and learning in writing challenge all pupils at an appropriate level so that their progress strengthens further
- staff question skilfully to develop and deepen pupils' understanding, particularly in writing.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Windsor and Maidenhead. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Richard Blackmore
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the deputy headteacher and shared the lines of enquiry for this inspection. I observed teaching and learning in classes, jointly with either you or the deputy headteacher. I examined samples of pupils' work during these observations. I met with representatives from the school's governing body, including the chair of governors. I also met with members of staff. I held a formal meeting with a group of pupils to discuss their views of the school and their learning, and spoke informally with pupils during my visits to classrooms.

I analysed documents, including the school's self-evaluation and reports showing the school's own information about pupils' achievement. I met with two representatives from the local authority. Safeguarding documents, policies and records relating to attendance were also considered. I took account of the 32 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 22 free-text comments. I also spoke to parents at the end of the school day. I also considered the 10 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.